



In Transit **January/February** **2011**

A Newsletter for King County Metro Transit Employees



*From the desk
of the General
Manager*

Little things make a big difference

While the new year is still relatively young, I'd like to spend some time reflecting on our many accomplishments in 2010, and also looking forward to the new challenges coming our way in 2011.

One of our achievements last year was passing an earlier-than-expected test of our revamped Adverse Weather Plan. When snow and ice came our way right before Thanksgiving, we executed the plan smoothly—thanks to those of you who worked so hard on it over the past two years.

The weather itself created some real problems for us: a very rapid freeze came on just as the evening commute got underway, which led to huge traffic challenges, major delays, and many stuck coaches.

But many things went well. We quickly implemented snow routes and told the public about it. Our new Division Operations Center efficiently processed the fast-and-furious inflow of information and coordinated necessary follow-up. Our redesigned online Alerts Center and new internet-based tools provided customers with timely alerts and service updates. And we saw improved coordination between Metro and the City of Seattle.

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Unlike Metro's current trolley buses, this visitor from Canada can travel off-wire for a short distance, thanks to a secondary propulsion system.

Trolley bus visit part of Metro study

Metro is studying modern trolley and diesel-electric hybrid buses as possible replacement options for our aging trolley fleet.

As part of this project, we're contacting other transit agencies that operate trolley buses to gather information and learn more about their systems. The project compares trolleys and hybrids on aspects including their capabilities, life cycle costs, service and operations, environmental factors, funding sources, and existing agreements.

In early December, we inspected a 40-foot trolley bus brought down by the Coast Mountain Bus Company of Vancouver, British Columbia—one of the agencies contacted for information. During a three-day visit, Vehicle Maintenance staff from Atlantic Base took a close look at technology differences between Metro's trolley buses and this newer model. We also received valuable input on the lifecycle assessment of our current trolley fleet from Coast Mountain staff members. In a mutual exchange of information, we also shared our own trolley maintenance experience and knowledge.

The bus was available for viewing by general Metro staff and other

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General Manager

I'd like to give special recognition to our coach operators. While dealing with very difficult driving conditions, they managed to make the trying circumstances more bearable for quite a few of our customers. In the days that followed the storm, we received 255 commendations and only 198 complaints—a reversal of the usual ratio after an event like this. Some excerpts from these commendations are featured on page 7.

Customers said they appreciated the little things that operators did, like an extra measure of kindness, or a calm demeanor. Such small things made a difference in what we were able to achieve and how we were perceived, both as individuals and as an organization.

Kudos also to all the service supervisors, coordinators, and staff members from Vehicle Maintenance, Power and Facilities, Sales and Customer Services, Paratransit/Rideshare Operations, Service Development, Transit Safety, Metro Transit Police, and other groups who took part in our response. It was a team effort of which we can be proud.

We had several other significant achievements in 2010. To name just a few: the launch of RapidRide; the valuable support we gave to the Regional Transit Task Force, whose recommendations will guide our efforts over the next several years; continued improvement in our collision safety record; the many contributions made by our 2010 Metro Wall of Fame nominees; the start of construction on the new Atlantic/Central operations building; an important industry peer review of Metro's passenger security program; and our response to an unexpected surge in ORCA pass demand.

New challenges coming our way include preparing a new Strategic and Comprehensive Plan for approval by the County Council; developing a balanced 2012/2013 budget; launching the RapidRide B Line between Bellevue and Redmond; and making a decision on

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Planning pays off in pre-Thanksgiving snowstorm

We got our first blast of winter weather on the Monday before Thanksgiving, and we were ready. Weather forecasts predicted significant snowfall and freezing temperatures throughout King County, so Metro decided on Sunday afternoon to start out service on Monday morning



Planning paid off when snow and ice came early to Seattle last November. Pictured: passengers board a trolley bus in the International District on Tuesday morning.

The response and support from the public was overwhelming. Metro received 255 commendations and 198 complaints, the first time in recent memory when commendations about an event outnumbered complaints (see page 7).

Metro's extensive planning since December 2008 paid off. The November storm gave us the opportunity to implement the adverse weather Division Operations Center (DOC) for the first time. With representatives from all the affected transit sections, the DOC provided a central point of contact for internal staff and facilitated joint decision making.

During the storm, Metro provided information to customers through a multi-media approach, including our Transit Alert system, which sends e-mails or text messages about specific routes; Metro Online's snow page, which was updated frequently throughout the storm; and the call center, where customers could call and speak with one of our information specialists. Our public information staff provided frequent updates to the media throughout the storm and responded to customers who follow Metro via Twitter.

With more wintry weather ahead, we continue to work to improve our response plan. Particular focus will be on reducing the number of stuck coaches, how service cut decisions are made and communicated to the public, and staffing plans for storms of long duration.

with all buses chained and all routes following their snow reroutes. This was the first full implementation of our updated adverse weather plan since the winter storms of the 2008-2009 season.

By the time Monday's afternoon rush hour started, roads throughout the region were slick with ice. Operators made extraordinary efforts to safely maneuver through the treacherous streets and deliver their passengers to their destinations, even though many trips took hours.



Two operators head out to work after spending the night on the floor at the bus base.



Performance corner

Service changes and customer satisfaction

To measure customer satisfaction with Metro's regular service changes, the Research and Management Information group sometimes surveys affected riders before and after a change. These surveys help us assess the effectiveness of the service changes, and they also help service planners take follow-up action when appropriate.

A year ago, Metro made significant changes to several routes in southwest King County. To get customer feedback on those changes, we surveyed the riders of routes 8, 60, 140, and 194 both before and after the changes. The "after" survey included riders using new Route 156, and also looked at rider satisfaction with Sound Transit services in the area that were previously served by Route 194, which was discontinued.

Overall, the riders showed positive responses to the service change.

Mean satisfaction ratings improved on several service elements: trip times, number of stops, personal safety, waiting areas (on two items), most physical aspects of the buses/Link, transfers (on one item), service frequency, and service reliability (on three out of five items). "Satisfied/Very satisfied" ratings by all respondents increased significantly (from 78 percent to 81 percent). However, there was no significant improvement in mean satisfaction ratings for "overall route service."

Satisfaction with the service changes varied considerably by route. The change in satisfaction was exceptionally positive among Route 8 riders, and very good among riders of Route 60 and modified Route 140. The results for new Route 156 were very encouraging: a comparison of mean satisfaction ratings for it and the previous Route 140 found nearly twice as many significant improvements as negative changes.



Many of our customers are smiling after Metro adjusted service in southwest King County.

The surveys also suggest that negative impacts from the service changes were felt most sharply by riders who previously used Route 194, particularly those who traveled the entire corridor between downtown Seattle and Federal Way. Discontinuing Route 194 increased satisfaction ratings for trip times and number of stops, but decreased them in other service areas: service frequency, transfers, and perceptions of waiting areas.

While you wait...



More than 80 King County Metro Transit bus shelters are getting some new art – thanks to local student photographers – along with regularly scheduled repairs and renovations. To see all of the photos in one place, visit Metro's flickr stream at <http://bit.ly/hB9skL> and check out the slideshow.

SHORT SHOTS IN TRANSIT

News briefs in and around the Transit Division



Getting the word out: Metro TV spot focuses on readiness for winter weather.

■ **Metro employees star in snow spot**—Metro aired TV commercials between Nov. 15 and Jan. 31 encouraging the public to be prepared for riding Metro during winter weather. The 15-second ad featured several Metro drivers, including former Operator of the Year **Nate Chappelle**, and crews from Vehicle Maintenance and Facilities Maintenance. Filming was done at the South Base training facility and involved 30 buses and two snowplows. The ad ran on KING-TV, KONG-TV, and Northwest Cable News, and is available online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1OJeJxJf9M>.

■ **A most timely snow drill**—On Nov. 9, just two weeks before our first snowfall of the 2010-2011 season, Metro held an exercise to train personnel and test the new adverse weather Division Operations Center. More than 60 staff members from Transit Operations, Vehicle Maintenance, Power and Facilities, Access, Service Development, Sales and Customer Services,

Communications, and the General Manager's Office, took part. The exercise tested the employee notification/call-out process and decision making processes for implementing snow reroutes and chaining buses, as well as the flow of communications between Operations and Customer Service. And the timing could not have been better planned!

■ **Yesler Building services didn't miss a beat**—On Nov. 30, Metro's Rideshare Operations and Commute Trip Reduction Service (CTRS) groups were among the tenants who had to suddenly leave the Yesler Building due to a fire in an electric vault. Without a known return date, Metro relocated its employees in order to continue their operations and capacity to serve customers. CTRS employees found temporary homes in the King Street Center. Rideshare Operations required significant space to maintain daily RideshareOnline, Custom Bus, and Commuter Van operations. Ridematch went to the Exchange Building; Planning and Accounting to the first-floor training

room at the King Street Center; and Commuter Van Operations to the Van Distribution Center in Redmond. Thanks go to **Mike Berman**, Transit IT services manager (Infrastructure Support Services) and other Transit IT and LAN personnel for providing laptop computers, printers, remote desktop access, and special software installations at all three locations. Despite having to share computers, function with limited phone service, and work shoulder-to-shoulder, our Yesler-based staff members continued providing services until they returned to full operation at the Yesler Building on Dec.15.

■ **North Base "Squeak Team" silences bus**—Riders and operators have been reporting a squeaking noise coming from the articulation joint in Metro's New Flyer low-floor buses. Our first fix was to lubricate the articulation joint bushing and guide, but this only lasted a few weeks before the problem surfaced again and led to other failures as well. North Base mechanics determined that the noise was coming from a misaligned drive shaft and bushing wear in the articulation joint. The team replaced the bushings and guide shaft with no manual or instructions for assembling and aligning the complex joint. Supported by their chiefs, they found a procedure that worked through trial and error. Vehicle Maintenance Fleet Engineer **Dan Brand** documented the procedure in an 11-page Vehicle Maintenance Service Bulletin (S10-10-#23, Hubner Articulation Joint Guide Shaft Bushing Replacement) issued in October. The team was made up of mechanics **Eric Apling**, **Dale Thompson**, **Steve Meyer**, and



Bicycle deputies Starla Martin (left) and Ed Hall (right) board a bus in downtown Seattle.

Gary Cerillo, and was supported by North Base chiefs **Warren Sanders** and **Vernon Brendle** and Component Supply Center Chief **Jim King**, who had special tools made.

■ **Metro receives grant awards**—The Federal Transit Administration awarded Metro Transit more than \$16 million from three separate grant programs in October. The awards included \$5.3 million from the State of Good Repair program to refurbish escalators throughout the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel; \$4.7 million from the Transit Investment and Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction (TIGGER) program to acquire a prototype electric bus that runs on battery power; and \$6 million from the Clean Fuels program for a joint proposal with Sound Transit to help cover the incremental cost of acquiring hybrid/electric buses. In addition, the Puget Sound Regional Council provided \$150,000 from its 2010 Statewide Transportation Enhancement grant program for Metro to initiate a bike share project, initially focused on downtown Seattle neighborhoods, South Lake Union, the University of Washington, and Redmond.

■ **Transit police emphasize security** — At the end of 2010, the Metro Transit Police did a series of major emphasis patrols in some of Metro's most security-challenged service areas, and on routes in those areas. These enhanced patrols focused on reducing crime and the fear of crime on Metro buses and properties; encouraging riders to observe laws, ordinances, and transit policies; and increasing the safety and security of Metro customers and employees. Coach ride teams, boarding teams, and bus zone patrol teams were in the field from 2 to 10 p.m. on four random days per week, focusing each day on one major service corridor and the primary route serving it. The patrols coupled plainclothes detectives with uniformed transit patrol and bicycle deputies for increased effectiveness.

The Metro Transit Police continue to run scaled-down emphasis patrols on selected routes.

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General Manager

the future of Metro's trolley buses (see page 1). I'll have more to share on our 2011 initiatives in the next issue.

Thanks again for all that you accomplished in 2010, and I look forward to working with you on the challenges of 2011. Along the way, let's keep in mind how much difference the "little things" can make.

– Kevin Desmond, General Manager

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Trolley bus



Metro staff members check out the interior of the visiting trolley bus.

stakeholders, including King County and Seattle elected officials. **Mike Eeds**, **Rich Zelinsky**, **Steve Burling**, and **Rick Mudge** (all with Vehicle Maintenance at Atlantic Base) worked with staff members from Coast Mountain and representatives from New Flyer and Vossloh Kiepe North America to facilitate the visit.

To learn more about Metro's trolley study, see www.kingcounty.gov/trolleyevaluation. Metro expects to complete the study in the second quarter of 2011.

KUDOS IN TRANSIT

■ **Metro health hero speaks out** — The December 2010 Health Matters e-newsletter featured **John Murphy**,



John Murphy was featured in the December Health Matters newsletter.

lead Vehicle Maintenance mechanic, as a Health Hero. In an online video, Murphy talks about the value of knowing his family's health history and other health-related factors as he strives for better health. To watch the video, visit www.kingcounty.gov/employees/HealthMatters/Newsletter/Dec2010.

■ **Access hosts safety award banquet for Veolia Transportation** —

On Dec. 5, the King County Division of Veolia Transportation, which provides Access paratransit services for Metro, held its safety award banquet at the Showare Center in Kent. More than 600 employees and family members celebrated the success of Veolia operators and the safety culture the company has developed. Trophies went to operators with 50,000 or more miles of accident-free driving. In total, 212 awards were given out, representing 92.9 percent of operators who have been in service more than one year.

■ **Vehicle Maintenance employee earns advanced certification** — **Terry Arthur**, program/project manager (Non-Revenue Vehicle group) has achieved Certified Automotive Fleet Manager (CAFM) status, recognized by the Center for

Professional Fleet Certification as the highest standard of excellence for individual certification in the fleet profession. Arthur earned the certification by demonstrating competency in eight core disciplines of fleet management: asset management, business management, financial management, fleet information management, maintenance management, professional development, risk management, and vehicle fuel management.



Terry Arthur has earned advanced certification.

■ **Metro police honor outstanding officers and staff employee** — The Metro Transit Police have announced the following honors for 2010: **Chris Pelczar**, Deputy of the Year; **Megan Dauber**, Detective of the Year; and **Gail Israelson**, Professional Staff Employee of the Year. Pelczar's sergeant wrote that he "stands out among his peers" through the amount and quality of his work, with a contagious work ethic that "motivates all around him." Dauber wrote the Metro Transit Police's revised suspension policy, a practical and comprehensive document that provides fair sanctions for breaking the law and/or Metro policies on Metro property. She also managed the implementation of new security measures in the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel after a major assault was caught on video and resulted in media scrutiny. Israelson, assistant facilities security coordinator, has

Transit operators of the month

December 2010

Atlantic Base: **Mary Graham**
Central Base: **Ed Cicotte**
Eastside Campus: **Oliver Chonin**
North Base: **Kelline Josh**
Ryerson Base: **Kimber Dale**
South Base: (declined)

January 2011

Atlantic Base: **Shannon Jackson**
Central Base: **Barbara Pastores**
Eastside Campus: **Raymond Jue**
North Base: **Don Bielenburg**
Ryerson Base: **Kieu-Diem Le**
South Base: **Donald Grabrick**

managed two major contracts with security companies. "Her attention to detail, critical thinking skills, and diplomacy have resulted in cost savings and streamlining processes on many occasions," wrote Facilities Security Coordinator **Mark Norton**, adding that she "exemplifies the best of what a King County employee is."

35-year service awards



In Transit congratulates the following employee on completing 35 years of service in 2010:

Larry Hagglund, purchasing specialist (Power and Facilities)

■ **Operator commendations rush in following November snow** — Many customers were favorably impressed by the skill, perseverance, and thoughtfulness of Metro operators during the pre-Thanksgiving snowstorm and its aftermath last November. Here's a small sampling of the many commendations Metro received:

This driver was an exceptional communicator...She both listened to her riders and talked clearly over the mike. She explained every time anyone new came on that we were on a reroute but not to worry...She talked about her riders...like they were all her friends and it was obvious she truly cared about their comfort and their personal circumstances.



On Nov. 22, with the snow and ice and terrible traffic, Mike showed what he is really made of. Excellent job navigating just horrendous conditions safely, and when we arrived in Renton—five hours late—Mike was still in a good mood, lifting the spirits of some very weary commuters. Major kudos to Mike!



I have never had a better bus driver... He was so patient, taking (the bus) slowly but surely up the hill. Not only that, he was patient and courteous to all of the riders, who were so freaked out...answering people's questions about where he was going and how close his route could get them to where they were going, and he was excellent about making sure that people got off where they needed to get off. I have never had a better experience on a bus, and every time I think of the absolutely amazing job this guy did I am in awe.



The bus driver made sure she picked up whomever she could on her way to her base, which was very nice since many people along the 24 route had been waiting a long time. I would just like to point her out as a hero of yesterday (11/22) because, although she had worked all day in the snow already, she made sure many of us who had been waiting out in the cold got a ride to where we needed to go. She was absolutely wonderful.



Just want to recognize the driver for his impeccable patience, calm manner, and appropriate good humor through the long gridlock ride. He stuck with it, kept us informed as best he could and did a great job.



Navigating the parking lot of the freeway, (the driver) continued his mission with care and humor over the next hour or more that it took to reach the U District offramp. "Three cheers for the driver!" the cry went out, as we exited the freeway. "Hip, hip, hooray," followed again by great applause and cheering. He kept our spirits and confidence high, and at journeys end, left us at our stops, with our heartfelt appreciation, respect, and gratitude.



Operators were praised for taking good care of their passengers during the storm and its aftermath.

In Transit



We'll Get You There

If you have any questions, comments or story ideas, send them to **In Transit**, KSC-TR-0824, or contact **Anna Clemenger**: 206-263-6482 or anna.clemenger@kingcounty.gov.

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ON THE MOVE

Transit Division retirements, promotions/job changes, new hires, and remembrances

Retirements

Operations

Michael Callahan, first-line supervisor (Service Quality) — December 31; 31+ years

Marilyn Davis, supervisor (Central Base) — January 28; 35 years

Roland McVay, first-line supervisor — December 9; 48+ years

Bruce Porad, supervisor (South Base) — March 31; 30+ years

Rail

Thomas Compare, rail operator — December 4; 32+ years

Service Development

Elaine Ducken, transportation planner II (Market Development) — January 4; 25 years

Vehicle Maintenance

Stephen Anderson, mechanic — January 28; 24+ years

Richard Higgins, equipment service worker — February 18; 30+ years

Charles Simpkins, equipment service worker — January 1; 21+ years

James Steichen, lead mechanic — December 31; 29+ years

Promotions and Job Changes

General Manager's Office

Ulta Slee to functional analyst I from project/program manager (term-limited)

Rail

Abbas Al-Lami to rail operator from transit operator

Laurel Carmelo to rail station custodian from rail facilities custodian

Yoonnin Chao to rail station custodian lead from rail station custodian

Rory Friel to rail operator from transit operator

Kevin Gumke to rail operator from transit operator

Linda King to rail operator from transit operator

Berni Hendrickson to rail facilities custodian lead from office custodian I (Power and Facilities)

William Ruhland to rail operator from transit operator

James Wagemann to rail operator from transit operator

Vehicle Maintenance

Steve Blackwell to lead mechanic from mechanic (North)

Ian Hanson to lead mechanic from mechanic (East)

Chris Zwiefelhofer to lead mechanic from mechanic (Atlantic)

New Hires

Rail

Bernice Mimms, business finance officer III — December 29

Nick Myron, rail electro mechanic — January 3

Gabriel Rukeyser, rail technical trainer — December 20

Justin Thomas, rail laborer (term-limited) — October 31

Service Development

Daniel Rowe, transportation planner II (term-limited), Market Development — January 10 (former graduate student intern)

Vehicle Maintenance

John Alley, assistant manager — December 29

Michael Beedle, upholsterer — November 15

In Transit online

Current and past issues of *In Transit* are available on the King County website at www.kingcounty.gov/InTransit.